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THE CLASSICISM OF WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR

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A life of nearly four-score years and ten would naturally reflect many different phases of thought, and in the writings of one whose literary activity extended from his boyhood days to the year before his death we might expect to find a history of the development and progress in the literary ideals of his age. But in the case of Walter Savage Landor this is only partially true. There is little change to be traced in his work. What he was in childhood he remained until the day of his death, a classicist. Although like a Colossus he bestrides the Romantic period, publishing his first book of poems three years before the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared, and living to clasp the hands of Tennyson, Browning, Emerson, and even Swinburne, yet he is not primarily a Romanticist, but stands singularly aloof from many of the tendencies of the early part of the nineteenth century. Of the elements which make up the complex "spirit of the age" of Romanticism he reflects only a few. The cry of a "return to Nature" finds little response in him; the "renascence of wonder" is a phrase that he might not have thoroughly understood. Though a passionate man himself and interested in the portrayal of emotions in others, he was the least subjective of a subjective age.

It was mainly in two respects that he was a Romanticist: in his love of personal and political liberty and in his interest in the past. And these two sentiments are closely connected, for it was Greece's struggle for independence and Italy's fight for liberty which were drawing the eyes of the world to themselves and their history, and joining to their cause the ardent revolutionary spirits of England. With the names of Byron, Shelley, and Keats the thought of the land of Pericles is so intimately united that we cannot think of these great representatives of Romanticism without recalling at the same time their interest in the classics.

This love of Greece and Rome—of their history, of their art, and their literature—was part of the larger aspect of Romanticism to which is sometimes given the name “mediaevalism.” As men began breaking away from tradition they looked for something new and unfamiliar to furnish interest for their work. Southey turned to far-distant lands and wrote his *Thalaba* and his *Roderick*; Scott delved into the early history of his own country and produced the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and *Waverly*. The interest in the classics was an outgrowth and development of this general and widespread interest in reanimating the past. It belonged to the later writers of the Romantic period rather than the earlier. We find none of it in Wordsworth till he wrote his *Laodamia* and *Dion*; Coleridge’s interest in the past is thoroughly romantic. But Byron’s love for “the isles of Greece, where burning Sappho loved and sung,” caused him to sacrifice his life for his adopted country. Shelley was imbued with the spirit of Greek mythology, and Keats, though in no real sense of the word a Greek scholar, gained through translations, classical dictionaries, and a close study of the Elgin Marbles that understanding of the Hellenic spirit which breathes in his “Ode to a Grecian Urn.” There was a steady growth in this love for the classics until it culminated in Tennyson, who found in the stories of Greece and Rome the most natural and appropriate subjects for poetry.

A mere glance at a list of the important Greek and Latin scholars of the early nineteenth century will reveal how widespread was the knowledge of and the interest in the classics. But it was a time not only of specialized classical scholarship, but of a genuine love for the literature of Athens and Rome, and familiarity with it, on the part of the general educated public. Cheap editions and translations of the classics were published and found a wide sale. The writers of the day were sure of speaking to understanding ears if they used a Latin quotation or a Greek allusion to enforce or illustrate a point. The classical side of a boy’s education received the greatest emphasis, and the ability to compose Latin verse was as much a requirement of the schools as the ability to construe Homer or Vergil. And Landor, as Sidney Colvin says, “is the one known instance in which the traditional classical education of our schools

took full effect and was carried out to its farthest practical consequences."

Yet in order to understand fully the classicism of the nineteenth century, including that of Landor, we must consider how sharp was the contrast between it and that of the age of Pope. To Dryden and Pope and Johnson it was the form, the technique, and the style of the Latin authors which appealed. A dead, imitative sort of classicism was the result. Pope wrote his "Imitations of Horace," and Dr. Johnson modeled his "London" and "The Vanity of Human Wishes" on the satires of Juvenal. But Landor and Shelley and Keats were inspired with the true Hellenic spirit, and ancient Greece was reincarnated in their work. Shelley created a new Prometheus, Keats gave new meaning to the myth of Endymion, and Landor has made Aspasia live again before our eyes.

Yet Landor, strong as is his affinity with the spirit of the age in his love for the classics, seems not to be in any sense a product of the age. It is almost as if he had been born in a period to which he did not belong. For his Hellenism is of a very different stamp from that of poets like Shelley or Byron, or of antiquarian scholars like Parr or Porson, or even of an artist like Keats. To Byron, Greece typified liberty, and his interest in her was his enthusiasm for a free people. To Shelley the literature and myth of Hellas furnished material for allegory whereby he could impress the truths of Godwinism upon others. But whereas we must look in *Prometheus Unbound* for the moral purpose, the significance underlying the Hellenic machinery of the drama, we need not trouble ourselves with such a search in reading *Pericles and Aspasia* or the dialogues between Epicurus and his pupils or between Marcellus and Hannibal. It is true that occasionally Landor spoils a dialogue by introducing allusions to contemporary politics, but in the main the words of the Greeks and Romans whom he reanimates are free from modern moral or political propaganda. An intimate sympathy with the life and spirit of the characters imbues them with a reality which no other modern has succeeded in producing. The impression conveyed is that Landor is for the time being Cicero, Tiberius, Aesop, or Lucian. True, he often voices his own opinions through

the mouths of his speakers. What earnest poet, novelist, or dramatist does not? But he is speaking in the terms of the theories and ideals of the golden age of classical antiquity, not the Romantic period of England. He does not make these old Greeks and Romans argue the cause of the perfectibility of man, or fulminate against the policies of the British crown. When Landor wishes to express his sympathies with Greece in her struggle for liberty he does so in his own person in an "Ode to Corinth" or an open letter on the "Revolution at Athens" contributed to the *Examiner*.

Landor was more truly an artist in his classicism than any of his contemporaries, except possibly Keats. While he felt, as did Shelley or Wordsworth, the call to be a poet, he felt none to be a prophet. He is singularly free from dogma. Although in this respect he most closely resembles Keats, yet he differs from him in that the younger poet felt more keenly the sense appeal of the external beauty of Greek myth and Greek art, and used them to spread his gospel of beauty and truth, whereas Landor, while fully appreciating this, was influenced more by the life and ideals of the actual men and women of past ages, their significance as a part of the universal scheme of existence. Keats, like a bee, gathered from the flowers of antiquity a sweetness wherewith to make his own honey; Landor, like a spring rain, sank into the classic soil and helped to make the flowers grow and blossom for the eyes of men, even becoming a part of them, the sap which flowed through their veins. No one could imagine *Endymion* to be the work of a Greek or Roman, but Elton has well said that the three dialogues from the Agamemnon story might be thought of as fragments translated from some lost old drama, dug up in a papyrus.

This may be due partly to the fact that Landor's scholarship was far greater than that of Keats, who had to get all his knowledge of Greek at second hand. Not that Landor is always consistently classic in thought and spirit, or always archaeologically correct. He was not a scholar like Dr. Parr, nor an antiquarian. There are some anachronisms and improbabilities in his work. His knowledge of Latin was wide and accurate, but his Greek scholarship was less unexceptionable. It was secured mainly

through the Latin, and his judgment, which was never influenced by the opinions of others, was sometimes prejudiced and one-sided. An instance of this is to be found in his attitude toward Plato. His was first-hand knowledge, for he spent many days in reading through the entire body of the writings of the great philosopher. But it was the faults and absurdities of his thought and expression which impressed him, not the virtues and sublimities, and the only results of his perusal of Plato are the severe attacks upon his style and his thought in the dialogue between Lord Chatham and Lord Chesterfield, and the picture of him as an absurd and pompous coxcomb in the conversation with Diogenes.

Not only was he sometimes at fault in his judgments, but often inaccurate in details. This was due to his method of work. As was said before, he was not an antiquarian. He did not pretend to write a book like Becker's *Gallus* and fill three-quarters of it with notes and appendixes to substantiate every detail of his picture of antiquity. Nor did he go to work in the manner of General Lew Wallace, who studied every inch of the topography of Palestine and every detail of the life and history of the Jews at the time of Christ before writing *Ben Hur*. Landor did not write in a library stocked with books of reference to which he could turn at need. He did not even study extensively about a person or period before writing. In fact his library was remarkably small for a man of letters. He gave away a book almost as soon as he had read it. But he did have an astonishingly retentive memory, and an unusually sympathetic intimacy with the past, which enabled him to reproduce the society of Greece and Rome with a vividness and reality which make any criticisms of inaccuracies in detail seem captious. After all it is not possible for the majority of writers to be infallible about the details even of modern life. It is the spirit which is the important part of any reanimation of past times, that which enlivens and vivifies the mass, rather than the dead letter of form and technique.

Landor said himself that he was particularly careful not to put into the mouths of his characters anything that history had assigned to them. The result is a new and individual interpretation of Greek or Roman thought, yet always one that is in harmony with

the time which is represented. So harmonious are speaker and language that one constantly finds himself wondering how a certain phrase was expressed in the original. Nor in the main is this effect produced by Latinisms or Grecisms in the English. Though he is fonder of long Latin derivatives than of short Anglo-Saxon words, these usually impart a dignity and sonorousness to his style suited to the subject which is being treated or to the character who is speaking. In *Gebir*, it is true, where he is imitating Vergil in style and manner, he introduces many awkward Latinistic expressions and clauses which are almost unintelligible to one who does not know the language, and in any case are a blemish in his lines. He errs chiefly in participial constructions such as, for example,

Lamented they their toil each night o'erthrown,
or
He spake, and indignation sank in woe,
Which she perceiving, pride refreshed her heart,
or
Him overcome, her serious voice bespake.

At times there occurs a use of a verb or phrase with a significance which is characteristically Latin and which therefore causes a feeling of difficulty, as, "I should rather have *conceived from you* that the wand ought to designate those who merit the hatred of their species," or "if you had not dropped something out of which I *collect* that you think me too indifferent." The use of "collect" in the sense of "understand" is marked archaic in the dictionary, but it is a very common meaning of the Latin verb *colligo*, especially in Quintilian. Again, we have such an expression as "the crown of laurel *badly cool'd* his brow," which is a clear echo of the idiomatic Latin use of *male*; or an instance of the Roman love of litotes, as in "no few," which recalls the common *non pauci*, or "Some, *nor the wealthier* of her suitors." He is somewhat too fond of Latin derivatives which are now considered rare, archaic, or obsolete, such as "propense," "discinct," "incondite," "intempestive," or "libant"; and when such a collocation of them meets the eye as "thy versicolored and cloudlike vestuary, puffed and effuse," it seems imperative to pause for breath. But with a list like this and the mention of a certain obscurity in language due to his effort

after classic brevity and compression, we come to the end of the faults due to Landor's command of the ancient languages. For often the phrases, especially such as are essentially Greek, add to the classic spirit of the dialogue. For instance, Helena's words to Achilles, "Childish! for one with such a spear against his shoulder; terrific even its shadow: it seems to make a chasm across the plain," add a Homeric touch in their reminiscence of the *ἔγχεα δολιχόσκηια* of the Achaeans. A similar effect is produced in the dialogue between Tibullus and Messala, where the older man cries to the poet, "Albius! that little girl is the delight of thy youthful years, and will be, I augur, the solace of thy decline," a prophecy which recalls Tibullus' own prayer,

Te spectem, suprema mihi cum venerit hora,
Te teneam moriens deficiente manu.

Landor's Latin propensities showed themselves very early, and he began writing Latin poetry almost as soon as English. This was part of his training in school, but he easily outstripped his mates at Rugby and composed verses for pleasure besides. Of these early days he wrote,

What golden hours, hours numberless, were squandered
Among thy sedges, while sometimes
I meditated native rhymes,
And sometimes stumbled upon Latian feet.

Unfortunately he sometimes turned his ability to use the language of Catullus and Martial in the wrong direction. When angry he betook himself to the Latin epigram and wrote bitter and scathing verses on his tutors, which in the end caused his rustication. His early friendship for Dr. Parr, Latin scholar and radical, was influential in forming his opinions both on the classics and on politics, for he spent many hours in his study, where, "with lisping utterance that suited so quaintly with his sesquipedalian vocabulary, he fulminated against Pitt and laid down the law on Latin from amid piles of books and clouds of tobacco-smoke." After leaving Rugby he passed two years under the instruction of Dr. Langley of Ashbourne, when he read Sophocles and Pindar and laid the foundation of his overwhelming admiration of the "proud complacency and

scornful strength" of the Theban, whose weighty brevity and exclusiveness he was eager to imitate. He went to Trinity College, Oxford, but was expelled from there too on account of a thoughtless prank.

All this time he had been writing steadily, both in Latin and in English, and in 1795 he published his first volume of poems, which contained a number in both languages and also a prose "Defensio," defending and advocating the use of Latin by modern writers. Except for its indication of his preference for Latin this was not a notable volume, for in diction and form he still showed the influence of eighteenth-century classicism. The next three years were spent in the study of the literatures of Europe, ancient and modern, with the exception of German. Of his stay during this time in Wales he wrote,

One servant and one chest of books
Followed me into mountain nooks,
Where, sheltered from the sun and breeze,
Lay Pindar and Thucydides.

Milton too must have accompanied him, for he was early a lover of his great classical predecessor, though far from an imitator of him.

The immediate fruit of these three years was *Gebir*, published in 1798, the same year in which the *Lyrical Ballads* appeared. It has little in common with them, however, being, like Southey's narrative poems, an epic on a "romantic theme with classical or at least unromantic handling." He hesitated at first whether to write it in Latin or English, but finally decided upon the latter, though a few years later he published a Latin translation of it. In 1802 appeared *Poems*, by the author of *Gebir*, which contained more Latin lyrics as well as "Chrysaor," an epic on the theme of the struggle between the gods and the Titans. The *Simonidea* followed in 1805-6, and two Latin odes in 1810. About this time he began work on his *Idyllia Heroica*, which was really the occupation he most enjoyed. He found relief from his troubles with his wife, his Welsh neighbors, and his publishers, not only in these but in writing epigrams and polemic poems as he had in Rugby days. The *Idyllia Heroica* was finally published at Pisa in 1820, and

"contained the carefully matured fruit of all his Latin studies and exercises during many years past." In this volume was an essay in Latin prose, "De cultu atque usu Latini sermonis."

From this time on Landor was engaged in the greatest of his prose works, the *Imaginary Conversations*, the first volume of which was completed in 1822 but not published until 1824. This contained only two classical dialogues, both of them Greek, but in the series which followed at varying intervals more were added, until, of the entire number of "imaginary conversations," about one-fifth are put into the mouths of Greeks or Romans.

In 1836 appeared *Pericles and Aspasia*, a series of letters written by them and other famous persons of the golden age of Greece, and by Cleone, a friend of Aspasia, who lived in her old home, Miletus. Some Latin poems contributed to the *Philological Museum* and prose criticisms on Theocritus and Catullus published in Mr. Foster's review represent a part of his classical work at this time. But he was chiefly occupied in preparing a collected edition of his works, which was published in 1846. This contained, as new material, beside some additional conversations, the *Hellenics*. These were partly verse translations of some of his Latin *Idyllia* and partly other idylls written originally in English. The next year he published a collection of his Latin poems entitled *Poemata et Inscriptiones*, by *Savagius Landor*, as well as a second edition of the *Hellenics*.

His last days at Florence were saddened by neglect and social ostracism. But he found pleasure in teaching Latin to his young American friend, Miss Kate Field, and in writing more verse and prose, Latin and English. Garibaldi was his special hero at this time, as Washington had been in his early life, and he wrote several political odes in Latin. In 1853 was published a volume entitled *Last Fruit off an Old Tree*, but the end was not yet. The real "last fruit" was gathered in 1863, when the *Heroic Idylls* appeared, just one year before his death. It was a volume of verse, partly Latin but mostly English, some of it old material. But there were half a dozen new verse dialogues on classical subjects, some of them the very best of his work of this kind, a remarkable achievement for a man of eighty-eight.

This is a long list of poetry and prose, representing in various forms Landor's love for Greek and Latin. Nor is it exhaustive, for we find indications of this interest in other works than those which purport to be on classical themes. Two of the dialogues in the *Pentalogia* are from the story of Orestes; Lord Chatham and Lord Chesterfield talk of Plato; Southey and Porson, Abbe Delille and Landor, and many others discuss in their imaginary conversations the ancient authors.

Among all the things that he wrote Landor's own favorites were his Latin poems. These are of course the least read today, but they are worthy of notice and admiration. They are as varied in subject as in meter and show skill in the handling of both. It is remarkable that the work of a modern should be so independent and individual, yet so essentially Latin. There are reminiscences at times of Horace, as in the phrase, "Felix sorte tua," or of Vergil, as in "satque superque dedit." But he is more free from such echoes than are the Latins themselves, a considerable portion of the commentaries on whom are occupied with references to parallel passages in other authors. Though not entirely free from slips in grammar and prosody he is in general careful and accurate in the handling of his meter. He is, for instance, quite Ovidian in the management of the elegiac distich, observing almost invariably the rules for the dissyllabic ending of the pentameter and the penthimeral caesura. Quite in the style of Ovid too are his little tricks of balance of the two halves of the lines, as for example,

Arripite arma, duces! arripite arma, viri!

or

Quod pueri discent, discere vellet avus.

But aside from this correctness of form, his Latin verse has the merits of vigor, spontaneity, and sincerity. It is more subjective than his English verse, for he preferred the Latin for the expression of his most intimate thoughts and emotions. Latin was in reality a second mother-tongue to him, and he was as much at home with it as with English. Late in life he said, "I am sometimes at a loss for an English word, never for a Latin." In his prose essays he pleaded strongly for the use of Latin in modern times and showed

by his own style how noble a vehicle of expression it could be made. His Latin prose is dignified, forceful, and varied. A good example of it is to be found in a sentence from the "*Quaestio quamobrem poetae Latini recentiores minus legantur*," which at the same time expresses his attitude toward the modern use of the language: "*Leves homines ille sermo Romanus noster arcebit severitate sua, comprimet vi feroces, garrulos compescet maiestate: caveamus ne langueat, obtorpescat, conticiscat.*"

The English poems are quite different from those of his contemporaries. It has already been said that he was the least subjective of the Romantic poets. This is probably due to his manner of looking at life, which was essentially Greek and therefore objective, for the Greeks regarded the problems of existence in a singularly impersonal fashion. This is undoubtedly the reason for the contradiction between his passionate nature and his poetry, which expresses the charm of a placid life. It is not insincerity or affectation, but merely a result of his ideals, which are aesthetic rather than moral. Some of the lyrics remind us of Catullus, others of Horace, with their lesson of "*aurea mediocritas*," and the ode addressed to Joseph Ablett is in tone and manner very similar to the Horatian epistles. One little poem is so strikingly like a lyric by Sappho that the first four lines of it will bear quoting for the sake of comparison. Landor's lines are as follows:

Mother, I can not mind my wheel;
My fingers ache, my lips are dry.
Oh! if you felt the pain I feel!
But oh, who ever felt as I!

This lovesick maiden recalls at once the girl whom Sappho makes to say,

Oh, my sweet mother, 'tis in vain,
I cannot weave as once I wove,
So 'wildered is my heart and brain
With thinking of that youth I love.

Landor was a master, especially in his poems to Ianthé, of these "exquisite eidyllia, those carvings, as it were, in ivory or gems, which are modestly called Epigrams by the Greeks."

Although an ardent admirer of Milton, Landor's classicism is not at all like that of the author of *L'Allegro*. In the first place Landor never mingled Christian and pagan elements so inextricably as Milton did in *Comus*. Classic myth to Landor was not a part of a man's everyday vocabulary, clamoring to be used whether it sorted with the subject that was being discussed or not. He reserved it for the themes to which it belonged, for the *Hellenics* and *Heroic Idylls*, and kept his English poems remarkably free from the classic jargon which had been so popular in England in the eighteenth century. Even in the short lyrics scattered through *Pericles and Aspasia* he shows his understanding of how unsuitable classical allusions would be. For the pages of the melic poets of Greece are almost as lacking in references to mythology as those of a modern poet, save for the simplest and most natural mention of Zeus or Aphrodite. It was the Alexandrians and their Roman imitators who packed their lines with the most obscure kind of references. Landor fittingly makes no attempt to copy them, but takes for his examples Sappho or Anacreon.

Although *Gebir* is neither Greek nor Roman in theme, it clearly shows in its form and phraseology the effect of Landor's Latin affinities. It begins in true epic fashion, "I sing the fates of Gebir," and the hero seems a reflection of Aeneas, and his visit to the underworld is undoubtedly a reminiscence of the sixth book of the *Aeneid*. The Latin constructions which occur have already been spoken of, and there is also a striving after Latin brevity. Notice, for instance, the compression of the lines,

Whate'er it be
That grieves thee, I will pity, thou but speak,
And I can tell thee, Tamar, pang for pang.

Sometimes the result of this compression is confusion and obscurity, especially in regard to the antecedents of the personal pronouns. One feels that if he had been writing in Latin the explicit *ille* or *hic* would have made all clear. The poem, however, with all its faults has dignity and power and has found favor with critics like Shelley and Southey. Of Gebir's speech to the Gadites, Southey said, "A passage more truly Homeric than the close of this extract we do not remember in the volumes of modern poetry."

In the unpublished lines entitled "An Apology for the Helenics," Landor wrote,

None had yet tried to make men speak
In English as they would in Greek.

This seems to be exactly what he has tried to do and succeeded in doing in the *Classical Dialogues*. Enough has already been said in general about his power to reanimate the past. "A great creative master of heroic sentiment," Sidney Colvin calls him, and Elton speaks of his "genius for uttering heroic emotion in the ancient way." It remains only to speak of some of the individual conversations—of the dramatic simplicity of the shorter dialogues, such as "Marcellus and Hannibal" or "Tiberius and Vipsania," over which Landor shed tears as he wrote; of the charm of "Aesop and Rhodope" or of "Epicurus, Leontion, and Ternissa," Landor's own favorite; of the dreariness of the discussions in "Demosthenes and Eubulides," which is spoiled by the effort, unusual for Landor, to introduce an attack on Canning; of the Roman dignity and impressiveness of the colloquy of the two Ciceros. His usual fault of a compression too great for clarity is to be found, but nowhere is there better expression of the glory of Greece than in the dialogue between Pericles and Sophocles, or of Roman pride and the spirit of conquest than in "Marcellus and Hannibal" and "Metellus and Marius." In the dialogue with his brother, Marcus Tullius Cicero says, "If wiser men than those who appear at present to have spoken against my dialogues should undertake the same business, I would inform them that the most severe way of judging these works, with any plea or appearance of fairness, is to select the best passages from the best writers I may have introduced, and to place my pages in opposition to theirs in equal quantities. . . . Take a whole conversation, examine the quality, the quantity, the variety, the intensity, of mental power exerted. I myself would arm my adversaries, and teach them how to fight me." It is impossible not to feel that in these words Landor is sounding a challenge to the critics. It is good and safe advice for him to give, for in general his dialogues would not suffer by comparison. It is impossible to make any word for word, line for line, or thought for thought

comparison, but we can set opposite in our minds the picture that Landor draws and that which we gain from ancient sources, critical or autobiographical. We feel sure that we are listening to the Cicero who wrote on "Friendship" and "Old Age," the Cicero of the letters and the dialogues. We recognize in the Tibullus who greets his patron Messala the calm, generous, kindly poet who voiced in his elegies his love for simplicity of life and sincerity of worship. Only in Plato do we find a portrait not in harmony with that which he paints of himself.

Pericles and Aspasia is different in type and quite unique in plan. It has been called "an extended Imaginary Conversation," but it is more than that. In the reconstruction of the society of the Age of Pericles, in the portrayal of the characters of Aspasia and Cleone, in the intimate tone of their correspondence, and in the criticism of Greek authors and the imitation of them in the lyrics, epigrams, and dramatic fragments which are scattered through the letters, Landor found room to express all he had ever known or imagined about the golden age of Greece. Nowhere in modern literature can we find anything to equal it in sympathetic interpretation of antiquity. Upon laying down the book we feel that we have been reading a real correspondence between real persons—humor, personalities, comment on current literature, dull passages, and all. Especially is this true of the earlier letters, which are remarkably spontaneous and natural. At times the wits and sages of Athens do speak rather too much like Landor himself or with the pomposity of Dr. Johnson, and the attempt to reproduce the public speeches of Pericles in the style of Thucydides is the least successful portion of the book. Occasionally we hear the modern speak, as in the passages that purport to be prophecies of achievements of future ages, as for example when Pericles speaks of the future of astronomy: "We none of us know, but Anaxagoras hopes that, in a future age, human knowledge will be more extensive and more correct; and Meton has encouraged us in our speculations. The heavenly bodies may keep their secrets two or three thousand years yet; but one or other will betray them to some wakeful favorite, some Endymion beyond Latmos, perhaps in regions undiscovered, certainly in uncalculated times. Men will know

more of them than they will ever know of Homer." But the very shock that a passage like this causes is a proof that usually Landor has caught the true Hellenic spirit. The impetuous Alcibiades, the noble and generous Anaxagoras, the clever and quixotic Socrates, as well as many other men great in history and literature, appear in these pages against a background of Greek life which in its details—though, as has been said, some inaccuracies may be found by the patient archaeological delver—is remarkably real and vivid.

But the gems of the whole book are the three dramatic fragments which Aspasia writes on the story of Agamemnon for the perusal of her friend Cleone. They show Landor's classicism at its best, in the fulness of their Greek spirit and in their independence and individuality of treatment. They may profitably be put beside the work of the great Greek dramatists and compared with it. The differences in the actual course of events are not important, for Landor simply adopts the custom of the Greek dramatists, who felt at liberty to alter the story to suit their own dramatic purposes. The change in character portrayal is also an aspect of this same thing, for the *Electra* of Aeschylus is entirely different from the *Electra* of Sophocles or of Euripides. In the *Coephoroi* she is represented as urging at first the death of her mother, and thus addressing her father's spirit,

I, father, ask this prayer, that I may work
Aegisthos' death, and then acquittal gain.

But she is comparatively colorless, and after the recognition scene with Orestes she disappears from the action entirely. In the *Electra* of Sophocles, on the other hand, she is a woman of strongly marked character, possessed by no thought save that of revenge. Through the whole action of the drama she remains the foremost character, eager at first when she thinks her brother is dead to carry out the scheme of vengeance upon Clytemnaestra and Aegisthos herself, urging on Orestes to the murder, pitiless and unsoftened by her mother's cries, sending Aegisthos to meet his fate with the exhortation to Orestes, "Slay him outright."

The *Electra* of Landor is no such spirit of vengeance. Although the delineation is thoroughly in accordance with classic ideals, she

is more of a true flesh-and-blood heroine than those of Aeschylus or Sophocles, or even of "Euripides the human." Let Aspasia herself tell of the new conception:

Had I openly protested that the concluding act of *Agamemnon*, the *Electra* of our tragedian, dissatisfies me, he alone of the Athenians would have pardoned my presumption. But *Electra* was of a character to be softened rather than exasperated by grief. An affectionate daughter is affectionate even to an unworthy mother; and female resentment (as all resentment should do) throws itself down inert at the entrance of the tomb. Hate with me, if you can hate anything, my Cleone! the vengeance that rises above piety, above sorrow; the vengeance that gloats upon its prostrate victim. Compunction and pity should outlive it; and the child's tears should blind her to the parent's guilt. I have restored to my *Electra* such a heart as Nature had given her, torn by suffering, but large and alive with tenderness. In her veneration for the father's memory, with his recent blood before her eyes, she was vehement in urging the punishment of the murderess. The gods had commanded it at the hands of their only son. When it was accomplished, he himself was abhorrent of the deed, but defended it as a duty; she in her agony cast the whole on her own head. If character is redeemed and restored; if Nature, who is always consistent, is shown so; if pity and terror are concentrated at the close; I have merited a small portion of what my too generous Cleone bestowed upon me in advance.

And has she not done so? Look at the closing lines of the fragment on the death of Clytemnaestra.

<i>Orestes (returning):</i>	She slew Our father; she made thee the scorn of slaves; Me (son of him who ruled this land and more) She made an outcast—Would I had been so Forever! ere such vengeance—
<i>Electra:</i>	O that Zeus Had let thy arms fall sooner at thy side Without those drops! list! they are audible— For they are many—from the sword's point falling, And down from the mid blade! Too rash Orestes! Couldst thou not then have spared our wretched mother?
<i>Orestes:</i>	The gods could not.
<i>Electra:</i>	She was not theirs, Orestes.
<i>Orestes:</i>	And didst not thou—
<i>Electra:</i>	'Twas I, 'twas I, who did it; Of our unhappiest house the most unhappy! Under this roof, by every God accurst, There is no grief, there is no guilt, but mine.
<i>Orestes:</i>	<i>Electra!</i> no! 'Tis now my time to suffer. Mine be, with all its pangs, the righteous deed.

His classicism finds expression in another form in the *Hellenics* and *Heroic Idylls*. Some of the latter, and the least spontaneous of them, are translations of his Latin *Idyllia Heroica*; the others were written originally in English. They are of various kinds, some in the shape of dialogues in verse, some blank-verse narratives, some in rhymed tetrameters, and there is one which tells no story but is a plea to mankind to aid in bringing about the liberty of Greece. Each is a jewel perfect in itself, some, like "Chrysaor" or the "Hamadryad," marvelously cut and flashing with a thousand lights; some, like the "Death of Artemidora," gleaming with the rich yet simple luster of a pearl. They again follow no models, ancient or modern, yet the spirit of them is that of the idyllic charm which breathes from the poetry of Theocritus, Moschus, and Bion. In their restraint and severity of beauty, as well as in the graceful flow of the language, they are thoroughly Greek. We see recurring again and again Landor's favorite themes—the Trojan cycle, the story of Iphigenia. Though "Chrysaor" is something quite different from the others, a poem on political liberty in the style of Shelley or Keats, the rest have no modern touch. As we compared the Agamemnon fragments with Aeschylus and Sophocles, so we may compare the "Menelaus and Helen" idyll with a similar episode in Euripides' *Trojan Women*. Here the resemblance is very close, especially in thought and feeling. There is a difference in form, for Landor stages the meeting with Menelaus and Helen as the only actors, whereas Euripides can picture Menelaus' struggles with himself in the words of Hecuba or the leader of the chorus. In the *Troades* it is more in what he does not say than in what he says that we find the emotions that are expressed in words in Landor's dialogue. In this case Landor certainly has not equaled the Greek reticence and brevity. But it is the same Helen, "gentle and unafraid," of whom Hecuba warned Menelaus,

Only fear to see
Her visage, lest she snare thee and thou fall!
She snareth strong men's eyes, she snareth tall
Cities; and fire from out her eateth up
Houses. Such magic hath she as a cup
Of death!

and who, in Lander's fragment, by her beauty reminded the son of
Atreus of the time when he brought her home a bride,

She looks as when I led her on behind
The torch and fire.

She of whom the leader of the Euripidean chorus said,

The sweet soft speech, the hand
And heart so fell: it maketh me afraid,

speaks in the same accents as the woman whose

voice is musical
As the young maids' who sing to Artemis.

In the modern poem we see the efforts of Menelaus step by step to resist the enchantments of Helen, as we do those of Achilles in Lander's dialogue, "Achilles and Helena." But in Euripides the king seems obdurate to the very last, but there are indications that her pleading, her beauty, and her suppliant position are not without their effect, for the chorus bid him "Be strong, O King," and Hecuba feels it necessary to urge him to "remember them she murdered." Thus in spite of differences in detail this is closer to a classic original than anything else which Lander wrote.

Lander was not known as a literary critic. A few critical articles contributed to Mr. Foster's review made up the sum total of his formal efforts in this direction. But scattered through all his works, especially his *Imaginary Conversations*, the *Pentameron*, and *Pericles and Aspasia*, are bits of criticism of authors ancient and modern. Not always was he just, as has already been seen in connection with his opinion of Plato, but he is often remarkably felicitous, not only in his judgment of an author but in his expression of it. In one short sentence he sums up the two sides of Euripides—the author, "the human with his droppings of warm tears," and the man, the "cold hater of his kind"—when he says, "Euripides writes tenderly, but is not tender." Equally epigrammatic is "The graceful and secure mediocrity of Xenophon," or, in regard to the use of the elegiac meter, "In Ovidius it gambols, in Tibullus it murmurs like the ring-dove." Needless to say his favorite authors were classic ones, Homer, Pindar, and Ovid hold-

ing prominent places in his affections. Of modern writers he admired Milton most of all. Wordsworth's "Laodamia" appealed to him more than any of the rest of his work. He considered the battle scene in *Marmion* worthy to rank with three other pieces of epic narrative, the first book of *Paradise Lost*, the contention between Ulysses and Ajax in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and the colloquy of Achilles and Priam in the *Iliad*. He refused to grant that Keats's style had come within the boundaries of Greece, declared Tennyson's "Morte d'Arthur" was Homeric, rivaling some of the greatest passages in the *Odyssey*, and considered Browning a very great poet, but wished that he would "Atticize" a little.

But Landor's classicism was not confined to things literary. His ideals, philosophy, and attitude toward life were largely those of antiquity, partly Greek and partly Roman. It was his constant effort to harmonize duty and desire that was essentially Hellenic, and his high, stern standards of nobility of character which caused Carlyle to exclaim, "The unsubduable old Roman!" I have already spoken of his purely objective attitude toward the problems of existence that was so typical of the ancient mind. Quite pagan were his ideas of personal righteousness and high-mindedness, which were almost totally unconnected with any thought of Christian service or devotion to others. And these old Roman virtues he not only practiced himself but expected to find in everyone with whom he came in contact; according to his ideal everyone should be a Scipio or a Brutus. It was his expressed aim to walk "with Epicurus on the right hand and Epictetus on the left." And there are touches of Epicureanism in his poems and elsewhere. The poem and greeting sent by Cleone to Aspasia on her birthday contain the essence of this philosophy, especially in the last sentence, "Sweetest Aspasia, live on! live on! but rather live back the past!"

To take this last from its surroundings and use it as the text of this paper is too great a temptation to be resisted. For this is exactly what Landor did; he lived on, but lived back the past and made others live it back as well—not the past of his own life, but the past of the life of the world. Nor is this confined to antiquity. His historic imagination is just as vivid when applied to the Middle Ages or to more recent conditions in England itself as when at

work on the scenes of ancient Greece or Rome. He was not an antiquarian, turning back to the fifth century before Christ from the nineteenth century after, but he belonged to the time of which he wrote; his life began, not in 1775 A.D., but in the Homeric age, growing and developing with the growth and development of the world and taking a vital and active part in the life of every period in every land. He is something more than a scholar, more than a historian, or more than a writer of drama or fiction. In him the living qualities of them all were fused and molded by the spirit of Rome on her seven hills and of Athens, the violet-crowned.

Doubtless he was more of a Roman in knowledge and scholarship but more of a Greek at heart. His Hellenism was a part of his inmost nature, a species of worship, and "in the very heat and fury of romantic predominance, Landor kept a cool chamber apart, where incense was burned to the ancient gods."

And through the trumpet of a child of Rome
Rang the pure music of the flutes of Greece.